

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, April 27, 1889, with transcript

Copy of a letter written by A. Graham Bell to Mabel (Hubbard) Bell. Sheeptown — Beinn Bhreagh, Monday, April 27th, 1889. Dear Mabel:

The important experiment of forcing a Ewe to adopt a strange lamb has ended successfully in spite of the predictions of Mr. Gifford. Ewe (11 of 1889) lost her lamb and I tried to get her to adopt (No. 35) a twin. At first she fought the lamb savagely and would not let her suck. I therefore shut them up together in a pen in a little sheep-house all by themselves — fastening the Ewe so that she could not prevent her from sucking.

The Ewe could lie down or stand up in the cage — but could not touch the lamb. The lamb could run all round the Ewe in the pen and choose her point of attack.

The Ewe struggled frantically every time the lamb attempted to suck — but, in spite of that the lamb succeeded in making a very fair meal. The Ewe then tried the expedient of lying down — to prevent the lamb from sucking. We soon stopped this by fastening a pole under her — removing it in the evening to enable her to lie down. He left her cribbed, cabined and confined all night as we feared she might kill the lamb if loose in the pen with her. Next day her struggles with the lamb were less violent and we did not have to pole her up. That night we released her in the pen with the lamb — watching her for some time however to see how she behaved. As she 2 seemed to tolerate the presence of the lamb — we left them loose together in the pen all night. Next morning when we went to put her in the cage again — we found the lamb taking her breakfast in the most natural way possible and the foster mother contentedly eating hay. We left them together loose in the pen until the afternoon — when we turned them out into one of the enclosures where they might be undisturbed. The little lamb followed her foster mother all about — occasionally getting a suck — and when we caught the lamb — the Ewe came bleating up to us to see what

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was the matter. I looked in upon them last night to see how they were getting along — and found the lamb lying asleep on the Ewes back ! Today they seem fast friends. The experiment has been a grand success.

Today we have divided up one of the large houses into pens for an experiment on the wholesale scale.

Tomorrow we will send the bulk of Grant's and Sherman's flocks to Crescent Grove to give us room here. John McAuley will care for them in the barn until the season is further advanced — when they will be turned loose in the woods above the Crescent Grove cottage — (the land I bought from Prof. Fay).

They will do well there — and their absence from Sheepville will enable the shepherds to devote all their attention to the important lambs.

The rams and last year's lambs will be turned loose on the Mountain tomorrow. This will give plenty of room in Sheeptown — and enable us to feed up the twins and extra-nippled lambs which will 3 be kept without being bothered by the presence of a multitude of lambs etc., which will be sold and not kept. Wednesday morning every twin will have a mother to itself — and a lot of ram lambs will be brought up on the bottle. I enclose graphical diagram of the condition of the flocks.

Your loving husband, Alec.